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Press Release

U.S. SHIP ARRIVES TO COMMENCE CYCLONE RELIEF OPERATIONS

DHAKA, NOVEMBER 24 -- In a one-day visit to Dhaka on November 23, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Timothy Keating announced the arrival of the USS Kearsarge off the coast of Bangladesh to assist in relief operations in the wake of Cyclone Sidr. Marine Brigadier General Ronald Bailey of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade will be overall commander of the operation designed to provide support and assistance to Bangladeshi authorities.

Admiral Keating, Brigadier General Bailey, U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affaires a.i. Geeta Pasi, and other U.S. officials met with Bangladesh Army Chief of Staff General Moeen U. Ahmed and officers of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division to discuss the current relief operations and ways in which the U.S. could assist. They agreed that Liaison officers from the Bangladesh military will be assigned to work with the U.S. troops during their assistance operations.

Admiral Keating expressed condolences to the Bangladeshi people on the loss of life in the cyclone and pledged to provide support for U.S. and Bangladeshi agencies involved in on-going relief operations. The United States will assist in providing clean water to the thousands of villages whose well-water has been compromised by the storm. In addition, medical teams from the Kearsarge will be able to deploy to assist with the medical needs of the population.

The U.S. has already begun providing water purification systems to priority areas to address the pressing need for clean water in affected areas. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the primary foreign assistance arm of the U.S. government, has so far delivered ten water purification systems, each able to produce 10,000 to 15,000 liters of water per day, through non-governmental organizations. A further four systems are anticipated in the next few days.

The USS Kearsarge, which was located in the Indian Ocean, was diverted to the Bay of Bengal to be available to provide assistance if requested. It arrived off the coast of Bangladesh on November 23. The ship, an amphibious assault vessel with a capacity for supporting humanitarian operations, has 20 helicopters which can be used for relief and

recovery operations and to assist the Bangladeshi military in reaching remote areas with food, water, and medical supplies. It also has significant medical facilities on board, including four main and two emergency operating rooms, x-ray facilities, a blood bank, laboratories, and intensive care ward facilities. The ship, which was commissioned in 1993, is based out of Norfolk, Virginia.

For further information, please see the U.S. Embassy Dhaka website's Cyclone Sidr Relief page, www.dhaka.usembassy.gov/cyclone_sidr.html, or contact the Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka at ++880-2-885-5500.

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GR/ 2007